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The Maple Ridge Ramblers were the big winners, taking home a bevy of team and individual prizes while Cowichan's Talon Hird joined an exclusive list of past champions.

Competing at the 2020 B.C. Secondary School Wrestling Association Championships presented by Onni Group on February 16 and 17 at Langley Events Centre, the Ramblers won the Girls title, the Aggregate team title, the Most Outstanding Female Wrestler Award and the Most Outstanding Female match awards.

Hird was victorious in the boys 54 kg division, becoming just the fifth wrestler in the 56-year history of the event to capture five provincial titles.

The Larry Kliparchuk Award (Aggregate champions which has only been presented since 2008) was the first in the history of the Maple Ridge program.

Maple Ridge scored 80 points while Alberni District was second with 68 points. Tamanawis did score 80 points as well but the Wildcats did not have enough female wrestlers participating to be eligible for that title.

Tamanawis (77 points) and Maple Ridge (48 points) each repeated, respectively, as the boys' and girls' champions in 2020.

"The girls title, we knew we would win, but the aggregate? Our guys ... we only have five or six guys so for them to step up and score enough points for us to win the aggregate is truly amazing," said Maple Ridge coach Bill McCrae.

The Ramblers had four gold medal winners (Ivy Threatful, Marquesis Haintz, Ryan Hicks and Marcus Menic) and one bronze (Teegan Masschke). They also had four fourth place and one sixth place finishers.

And Threatful and Haintz won more than just their weight classes.

Threatful was selected as having competed in the Most Outstanding Female match, defeating Zena Shew of South Island Distance Education Centre in the 51 kg weight class. It was the second straight year Threatful was involved in the Most Outstanding Female match although she was on the losing end in 2019. Her opponent last year also happened to be Kiana Shew, Zena's older sister.

As for Haintz, the Grade 12 student capped off her high school career in style, winning a third consecutive gold medal and the Most Outstanding Female wrestler award.

Haintz defeated Burnaby Mountain's Marley Jackson in the 54 kg weight class and capped off an impressive two days where she did not concede a single point.

"She is untouchable," McCrae said. "And tenacious. Just look at her face: rarely smile and is just go, go, go. And she has outstanding technique."

“I was really hoping to get it because it shows how hard I worked,” Haintz said, admitting she fully believed another wrestler was going to win the award.

“It is really cool to be able to win in my Grade 12 year and go out on a high note.”

Haintz is slated to attend SFU in the fall where she will continue her wrestling career.

While Maple Ridge scored 48 points to repeat as the girls’ champion, St. Thomas More Collegiate was second with 38 points and Alberni District was third at 34 points.

Tamanawis’ scored 77 points to run away with the boys title as another Surrey school, Panorama Ridge, was second at 41. Trailing just behind in third spot was Cowichan with 39.

Tamanawis had two male wrestlers win gold (Sehijvir Sandhu and Karanpreet Gill) while three others won silver (Rohit Bal, Bhupinder Gandham and Shaan Randhawa) and one (Baltej Mundhi) took bronze.

The gold was the third straight for Gill (the 2019 Most Outstanding Male wrestler) while Sandhu repeated his 2019 title.

It was also a historic night for Cowichan’s Talon Hird, who not only became just the fifth wrestler to win a gold medal in each year of high school, but he was also presented the Most Outstanding Male wrestler award.

Hird was a dominant force all season, capping off his high school career with gold in the 54 kg weight class over Tamanawis’ Rohit Bal. The last two titles were in the 54 kg class, while the first three were in the 45 kg (Grade 8), 48 kg (Grade 9) and 51 kg (Grade 10) divisions.

Hird joins Brad Caulfield (New Westminster, 1969-73), Yorgo Romanis (Alberni District, 1994-98), Harvie Sahota (Rick Hansen, 2004-09) and Isaac Bernard (Guildford Park, 2008-12) in the exclusive club of five-time provincial champions.

He also figured should he fulfil that, there might be a strong possibility he would pick up the Most Outstanding Wrestler award.

“It means more than I can put into words. In my final year, after so many years of driving and working hard to try and be the best athlete that I can be, for it to end with this is better than I could have imagined,” Hird said of the award. “But I knew it wasn’t guaranteed. But this is definitely a bonus big time. This is fantastic.”

“When I first saw Talon, he was in Grade 5 and he was the smallest kid, but I saw that nasty, that grit, that determination to push himself. You could see that at a young age,” said Hird’s coach Nick Zuback. “He bought into the program, saw that I believed in him and then just went with it and we haven’t looked back since.”

“I knew the potential was there just because he did possess all those characteristics that it takes to be a five-time champ, to continue to win because sometimes when people win they slack off or they don’t

have the same drive because they have already won (a title). He continued to have that drive, that focus.”

“He puts the extra in. When it’s not a wrestling day, he is working out or he is doing cardio or he is playing another sport,” the coach added. “He is really driven. He watches what he eats, he watches videotape, he really does it all.”

The Most Outstanding Male match award was the 70 kg final won by Gagan Grewal (Abbotsford Traditional) over Seth Price (Alberni District). It was the second straight gold for Grewal who won in the 60 kg weight class in 2019. Price also jumped two weight classes after winning bronze last year in the 63 kg division.

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